

Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers March 1, 2004

NETS Features

April 8th is National Alcohol Screening Day

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is co-sponsoring National Alcohol Screening Day (NASD), a one-day event that offers education, screening and brief intervention for anyone who drinks alcohol. The program uses confidential screening and brief intervention to allow those who attend an event to assess their drinking behaviors for their own health, and/or to obtain referral for evaluation and treatment to prevent the progression of an alcohol problem, if indicated. NASD is an excellent opportunity for businesses or organizations to promote health and safety to its employees. Employee alcohol use causes a variety of problems including alcohol-related traffic crashes both on and off-the-job. NHTSA states that despite major advances in traffic safety, alcohol continues to cause approximately 40,000 deaths and 2 million injuries each year. About three out of every 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related traffic crash during their lifetime. The federal government estimates that, 7.4 percent of full-time workers ages 18 to 49 – 6.5 million people have drinking problems. Alcohol costs American business an estimated \$134 billion in productivity losses, mostly due to missed work. An average employee who engages in hazardous drinking adds an average \$3,700 to his/her employer's health care costs. In fact, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services indicate that alcohol abuse is one of the top ten conditions affecting employer productivity. To participate in the event, employers can visit and register on-line on the National Alcohol Screening Day website at: www.nationalalcoholscreeningday.org or call (800) 253-7658 for information on receiving a free National Alcohol Screening Day registration kit. In order to guarantee delivery of your kit(s) by April 8, you must register by March 29, 2004.

Latest Traffic Safety News:

9th Annual Michigan Traffic Safety Summit- April 27-28, 2004, Lansing, MI.

This annual event brings together federal, state and local partners to learn about emerging traffic safety trends, share innovative programs and become informed about new technology to assist in reducing traffic deaths and injuries in Michigan. Join us! Registration forms for participants and exhibitors are available online at www.michigan.gov/ohsp. The site includes hotel information, the program agenda and a conference registration form. You can fill in the form online; however, you must print the form and fax or mail it to the Office of Highway Safety Planning to register. No online registration is available.

Move Over.....Finally

Michigan House Bill 4887 (Pastor-R, Livonia) finally passes. This new law will now require drivers to either move over one lane or slow down when approaching a tow truck or wrecker assisting at a crash scene at the request of a police agency. The bill essentially includes tow trucks or wreckers in the definition of an emergency vehicle while operating in this manner. The towing industry had testified that a number of tow truck drivers had been struck and injured or killed by passing motorists in recent years. Governor Granholm is expected to sign the bill into law in the very near future and will have immediate effect.

US Senate Voted 76-21 to Approve Six-Year Surface Transportation Bill

The Senate voted 76-21 to approve a six-year, \$318 billion surface transportation bill, which is \$100 billion larger than the existing highway spending bill. The White House recommended \$256 billion over six years, and President Bush has said he would veto any bill that went beyond that or used tax increases or deficit spending to finance it. The legislation now moves to the House, where lawmakers are divided over the measure. The money from the bill is used to build roads, repair bridges and improve public transit. The current spending bill was originally set to expire Sept. 30, but was extended to Feb. 29. In addition to spending, the Senate bill includes a number of highway and vehicle safety provisions, including: a permanent exemption from Hours of Service rules and utility service vehicles; new safety requirements for 15-passenger vans, as proposed by Senator Olympia Snowe; and changes to the medical fitness requirements for truck drivers. To view the bill, visit <http://www.congress.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d108:SN01072>. For a full article on the bill, visit <http://www.innobriefs.com/editor/20040217reauthorization.html>.

New U.K. Technology to Reveal Who Receives Red Light Running Ticket

Toyota will unveil a car that takes away the guesswork when it comes to identifying the speeder in the family. Finding the rightful recipient of the red light running ticket could be as simple as sliding in a mobile phone-style SIM-card instead of a key. The card would contain details of the driver's license

and address. Wireless technology would allow the car to communicate with the speed camera, and the fine could be deducted from the driver's credit card before he or she even made it home. At the moment, New South Wales law requires motorists who dispute a speed-camera fine to sign a statutory declaration that the driver was not the registered owner. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some motorists "share" their points with family members who may be reaching their demerit points limit.

Rumble Strips Down Centerlines of Two-Lane Roads Reduce Head-On and Sideswipe Crashes

Rural two-lane roads generally lack physical measures such as wide medians or barriers to separate opposing traffic flows. As a result, a major crash problem on these roads involves vehicles crossing the centerline and either sideswiping or striking the front ends of opposing vehicles. These types of opposing-direction crashes account for about 20 percent all fatal crashes on rural two-lane roads and result in about 4,500 fatalities annually. The Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) evaluated a potential engineering countermeasure for such crashes — installation of rumble strips along the centerlines of undivided rural two-lane roads to warn/alert distracted, fatigued, or speeding motorists whose vehicles are about to cross the centerlines and encroach into opposing traffic lanes. Overall, motor vehicle crashes at sites treated with centerline rumble strips were reduced 14 percent. Injury crashes were reduced by an estimated 15 percent. To view the full study, visit the http://www.atssa.com/downloads/centerline_rumble_strips.pdf.

New Website for Information on Work Zone Crash Data

The National Work Zone Safety Information Clearinghouse has created a new section on its Website that centralizes work zone crash/accident data and information. The information can be found at http://wzsafety.tamu.edu/crash_data/.

Report Shows New York Drivers are Back to Using Handheld Cell Phones While Driving

According to a report by the Associated Press, a new study from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) found that although New York drivers hung up their cell phones when the state banned them three years ago, they are back to using them at nearly the same rate they were before the ban. In 2001, New York became the first state to prohibit drivers from talking on handheld devices while operating a motor vehicle. IIHS found that the rate of New York drivers chatting on cell phones declined to 1.1% from 2.3% in the first few months after the law was passed. However, by March

2003, a year after the law took full effect, the rate had risen to 2.1%. For the full article, visit <http://www.news8.net/news/stories/0204/123654.html>.

New Technology in UK Protects Your Vehicle

A new technology can protect your car against thieves. A car is fitted with a remote immobilizer, and a radio signal from a control center miles away will ensure that once the thief switches the engine off, he will not be able to start it again. For now, such devices are only available for fleets of trucks and specialist vehicles used on construction sites. But remote immobilization technology could soon start to trickle down to ordinary cars, and should be available in the UK in two months. A control box fitted to the car incorporates a miniature cell phone, a microprocessor and memory, and a GPS satellite-positioning receiver. If the car is stolen, a coded cell phone signal will tell the unit to block the vehicle's engine management system and prevent the engine being restarted.

News from USDOT

Tires are Better in 2004 at Resisting Wear

Tires are better at resisting wear than they were in 2000, when Firestone recalled millions of tires that were prone to lose their tread and blow out, according to federal data. But tire ratings for traction performance and heat resistance have seen little change since 2000, (NHTSA said. Six percent of tires

rated between a 500 and a 600 on resisting wear this year, meaning they can last four to six times longer than a basic tire, and at least 25 tires had a rating of 700 or higher. In 2000, there were few tires with a 600 and no tire with a 700. For more information, visit NHTSA's website at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/nhtsa/announce/press/pressdisplay.cfm?year=2004&filename=pr07-04.html>.

Request Denied on Position of Crash Test Dummies in the Vehicle

U.S. regulators denied a request from a prominent insurance industry group to change how crash test dummies are seated in cars. But NHTSA did not rule out revisiting the issue if later evidence shows that longtime government standards are inadequate. IIHS said in a 2002 petition that standards for dummies placed in adjustable front seats for common tests do not reflect real-world driving conditions. The group also said that manufacturers could easily manipulate seating positions to gain more favorable results.